

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

TITLE: BUSINESS METHOD FOR TRACKING
CUSTOMER PRESENTATIONS BY
VEHICLE SALES REPRESENTATIVES

INVENTORS: GERALD LACOUR, GARRETT LACOUR,
ROBERT CORBIN and MATT NOWICKY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of The Invention

The present invention relates to business methods, and business methods in the vehicle sales area in particular.

2. Background Information

While profits of vehicle dealerships are seldom high on the list of most individuals' priorities, a vehicle dealership must be profitable if it is to survive. If it is not profitable, it will go out of business. If this event is repeated across the country, vehicle sales will be hampered, with a ripple effect which will seriously damage the United State's quite vehicle-dependant economy.

The dealership profit realized in many vehicle transactions stems as much from "after-market" sales, as from the actual vehicle sale itself. Sales of extended warranties, after-market alarms, fabric and paint protectors, window etching, up-grade electronics, and even financing-related products (credit life insurance, for example), all can contribute significantly to an automobile dealership's profits.

1 The aforementioned products and services are not solely
2 profit opportunities for dealerships, but also opportunities
3 for customers to enhance the enjoyment of their new vehicle,
4 increase their personal safety, and/or more effectively manage
5 their finances.

6 If a vehicle purchaser is never offered, or is
7 ineffectively offered the after-market products and services
8 available from a particular dealership, everyone loses.
9 Nevertheless, this is a frequent problem. Whether because of
10 poor training, personal issues, or apathy, many sales staff
11 members in vehicle dealerships do a poor job, if at all, of
12 presenting aftermarket products or services. Often, if they
13 do present the opportunities, the presentation is of a nature
14 as to repel, not attract sales.

15 Even if a sales staff member can be motivated to present
16 after-market opportunities to customers, no amount of training
17 or motivation can overcome a given individual's lack of basic
18 talent in effectively presenting certain opportunities to
19 customers, nor worker apathy, when such is an issue. And top
20 talent sales staff are not always available to any given
21 dealership at-will.

22 In view of the above, it would well serve all involved in
23 the vehicle purchase transaction to have a system or business

1 method available which both optimizes the quality of
2 presentation of after-market product and service
3 opportunities, and provides means by which a dealership can
4 track whether or not such presentation occur in each and every
5 sales transaction.

6
7 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

8 In view of the foregoing, it is an object of the present
9 invention to provide a novel business method which benefits
10 automobile dealers and customers.

11 It is another object of the present invention to provide
12 a novel business method for conducting vehicle sales
13 transactions that involves utilizing audio visual recordings
14 for after-market product and service presentations.

15 It is another object of the present invention to provide
16 a novel business method for conducting vehicle sales
17 transactions that involves utilizing audio visual recordings
18 for after-market product and service presentations, the use of
19 which on each occasion generates a later-searchable record
20 which indicates that a presentation was made, and if it was
21 displayed to completion.

1 In satisfaction of these and related objects, the present
2 invention provides a novel business method and associated
3 apparatus which, through computer-based audio visual
4 technology and database technology presents, upon selection,
5 one or more audio visual presentations in promotion of a
6 particular after-market product or service, and upon each use,
7 records in a searchable database, that which was presented, by
8 whom (which salesperson), to whom (which customer), and what
9 was purchased. Additional data may easily be required for
10 completion of the presentation and later analysis by
11 management, such as, the financing selected by the customer,
12 the type of vehicle purchased, demographic data, day of week,
13 or time of day, and so forth, any one of which data fields may
14 provide useful information for marketing purposes.

15 The present system and associated method will enable
16 automobile dealerships to track use and effectiveness of
17 after-market presentations as to salespeople, after-market
18 programs, customer categories, etc. Because the audio visual
19 presentations are, in the preferred mode of the invention,
20 professionally "staged" and packaged, complete with
21 professional voice-overs, "virtual actors", suitable music,
22 etc., all presentations will be standardized and optimal, and,

1 accordingly, not affected by the variations among sales staff
2 members as to personal presentation styles or skills.
3

4 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

5 Computer-based audio visual presentations are certainly
6 not new, but the combination of their use as to specific after-
7 market vehicle products and services, combined with a tracking
8 mechanism to insure their use is new and unobvious.

9 The present system involves an audio visual data file (a
10 file stored on a computer disk which may be "played" through
11 use of well-known multi-media software) which includes a
12 promotional presentation for each after-market product or
13 service which a particular vehicle dealership wishes to offer
14 to its customers.

15 A software program which coordinates the presentation
16 system ("a promotional presentation management software
17 routine") presents an on-screen start menu which, through use
18 of clickable soft "buttons" allows the sales staff member to
19 either select the product or service presentation(s) that a
20 customer will be shown, or to select criteria upon which the
21 software will automatically "select" the appropriate
22 presentation or presentations, based on input specifics of a
23 particular transaction or customer. The software can, through

1 ordinary skills of any competent programmer, be customized to
2 allow either option, and any number of criteria combinations
3 for tailoring presentations to individual customers. In
4 addition, the menu will call for the sales person's employee
5 ID number (or some other, suitable identifier) and for the
6 customer's name.

7 Upon completing the initial menu selections, the
8 management software, directly, or by actuating secondary
9 software, plays the appropriate audio visual files. At the
10 end of the presentation, a secondary menu appears, and
11 requires input as to the purchasing decision of the customer.
12 At this point, after the selection is made, the next product
13 or service presentation is shown, again, with a menu or input
14 screen at the conclusion, which requires a "YES" or "NO" type
15 response as to the purchasing decision.

16 As the after-presentation response is given, the
17 management software records to a searchable database: (1)
18 which particular presentations were shown; (2) if the
19 presentation(s) was/were shown to completion(as indicated by
20 the receipt of a "YES" or "NO" response); if the
21 presentation(s) was/were not viewed to completion (as
22 indicated by the lack of a response after a pre-determined
23 period of time without a response, in which case the system

1 re-sets to the initial menu); (4) what the purchase decision
2 was as to each related product or service; (5) who the sales
3 person was; and (6) any other data by which the dealership
4 wishes to track presentations and sales pertaining to after-
5 market products and services.

6 The above data is recorded in a database (usually in a
7 remote server, if the computer which is utilized is
8 networked), but in any event in a database which is password
9 protected, and can be searched as to any criteria which is
10 recorded for each transaction.

11 Of course, all menus and software screens can be
12 customized with the user dealership's name and logo, and the
13 product presentations can be customized as to content,
14 groupings, or durations.

15 Software for managing the presentations and data
16 recordings as described above may be obtained from Innovative
17 Aftermarket Systems, Inc. of Leander, Texas (assignee of the
18 subject patent application) under the trademark SMARTTRAC.

19 Although the invention has been described with reference
20 to specific embodiments, this description is not meant to be
21 construed in a limited sense. Various modifications of the
22 disclosed embodiments, as well as alternative embodiments of
23 the inventions will become apparent to persons skilled in the

1 art upon the reference to the description of the invention.
2 It is, therefore, contemplated that the appended claims will
3 cover such modifications that fall within the scope of the
4 invention.
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23